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SUBJECT: POLAND: MOVING FORWARD ON EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR DAN SAINZ FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)  
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11. (C) SUMMARY. A month after the formal launching of the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP), Polish officials are determined to maintain the initiative's momentum in the face of upcoming Union leadership changes, a lukewarm reception by beneficiary countries, and possible Russian hostility. The MFA expanded its staff dedicated to the initiative and is trying to keep both the EU and beneficiaries focused on implementation. They have so far failed, however, to articulate a possible U.S. role to support the initiative. END SUMMARY.

BOLSTERING STAFF AT THE MFA  
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12. (C) FM Radoslaw Sikorski and Swedish counterpart Carl Bildt successfully pushed their Eastern Partnership initiative through the European Union's bureaucracy, but the hard part, implementation, is just beginning, according to Marcin Zochowski, an MFA expert on the EaP. "We have the money allocated (Euro 600 million), now we have to put it to effective use," he added. Despite a tight ministry budget, Sikorski--staking his credibility on the program's success--established a team of ten full-time staff under Andrzej Cieszkowski, the MFA's Plenipotentiary for the EaP, to ensure that the initiative will not fizzle. The team will focus on engaging beneficiary countries, coordinating the initiative with the EU bureaucracy, and determining how third countries might be able to support it.

WARMING RESPONSE FROM EAST, BUT CHALLENGES REMAIN  
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13. (C) Zochowski said the greatest challenge has been selling the EaP to beneficiary countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) concerned that it may be merely a substitute for EU accession. In addition, most are distracted by their own political and economic challenges. Nevertheless, Polish officials say they are making headway. Belarus is stepping forward with the most concrete project proposals, and Ukraine--despite initial resistance--appears willing to take on a leadership role for regional projects, said Maria Slebioda, MFA Section Head for Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova. She noted, however, that Belarus had adopted an "a la carte" approach to the EaP, steering clear of any initiatives with even a hint of civil society development. Polish MFA and Presidential Chancellery officials also expressed frustration with Georgia, which they said failed to propose constructive projects and had frequently complained that the EaP lacked a security component. In early May, Witold Waszczykowski, Deputy Director of the President's National Security Bureau, bluntly advised a Georgian delegation to "be smart, don't whine, use

the EU assistance wisely, do your homework, and move closer to the EU."

#### MAINTAINING MOMENTUM IN THE EU

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14. (C) Polish MFA officials and think tank representatives are concerned that leadership changes in the European Commission could at least temporarily disrupt the work of the EaP. But they point to regular past contact with the Commission and hope to minimize the transition's impact on the EaP. "We've worked well with the current Commission," said Zochowski, "and we hope we can help bring the new team quickly up to speed."

#### CONCERNS ABOUT RUSSIA

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15. (C) Although Russian FM Lavrov apparently accepted Sikorski's rationale for the EaP, Polish officials remain wary that Russia still might react negatively once implementation gets underway. Tomasz Orłowski, MFA Section Head for the Caucasus and Central Asia, told us that the MFA was open to limited Russian participation, but was exercising a "healthy dose of skepticism" about Russian motives. Poland supports Russian participation on a case-by-case basis for programs that generate mutual benefits for the EU and Russia. Orłowski cited Kaliningrad region development as a possible area for cooperation under the EaP that might attract Moscow's interest.

#### FIGURING OUT A ROLE FOR THE U.S.

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16. (C) MFA officials say they would welcome U.S. participation, but they continue to tell us it is too early to determine what role the U.S. would play, because the European Commission is still working on formulating specific projects. Nevertheless, Polish officials support closer coordination of U.S/EU policies toward Eastern European countries, including via the EaP. They are open to our idea of hosting seminars in Warsaw that would bring together EU and U.S. experts to discuss measures to maximize the EaP's effectiveness. They have also expressed concern about the beneficiary countries' ability to manage EaP projects and administrative capacity to absorb EU funds; they would welcome U.S. support to improve the recipients' capacity.

QUANRUD